

COCHRANISM DELINEATED ;

OR

A DESCRIPTION OF, AND SPECIFIC FOR;

▲

RELIGIOUS HYDROPHOBIA,

WHICH HAS SPREAD, AND IS STILL SPREADING,

IN A NUMBER OF TOWNS IN THE

COUNTIES OF

YORK AND CUMBERLAND,

DISTRICT OF MAINE.

==

BY A WATCHMAN.

==

*For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go set a watchman ; let him declare
what he seeth.—PROPHET ISAIAH.*

—

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FOR THE YEAR 1890

AND THE STATE OF NEW YORK

COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

JOHN A. COCHRAN, JR.

ALBANY, N. Y.

W. A. WATKINS

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COCHRANISM DELINEATED.

WHILE passing through the town of Scarborough, in the month of February, 1817, I called at a private house of my acquaintance, for refreshment ; who soon informed me of a stranger, who had lately moved into the neighbourhood, by the name of JACOB COCHRAN, who called himself a preacher; that he had lately moved his family into the place, from Conway, in the state of New-Hampshire ; that he belonged to no religious society ; that he was ordained by private brethren ; that he made uncommonly high pretensions of a miraculous power vested in him, equal, if not superior to the *apostolic* ; that the religious people in that vicinity, and many others, esteemed him very highly, &c. Having had an opportunity of travelling through several of the States, and perhaps through every county, and most of the towns in the District of Maine, and made many observations on quackery of various kinds, particularly religious deception—the report I received from this family respecting Cochran, sounded like that of an impostor or religious juggler.

Expecting to make but a short stay with this apparently pious family, I endeavoured to give them the most prominent features of an impostor, as laid down in the bible, and from my own observation. I was then about to take my leave of them, when they informed me this same singular man was expected to preach at their house the following evening. They urged me hard to tarry and hear him ; I at length consented. When the evening came, the people assembled. Cochran asked me to preach. I declined, alleging I came to hear. I heard him through. The people applauded what he said, by *Amens* and shouts, though nothing indecorous appeared. I gave the people a short exhortation, which seemed much to his mortification ; but he kept his resentment to himself, till after I had left the place. I still retained my suspicion that he was an impostor ; left my advice with the family, not to take him into too

near a connexion, until they were better acquainted with him, which advice they received kindly, and have never forgotten.

I heard no more from this stranger, until the summer following, when a report was in circulation, that large numbers (some said more than one thousand) had been converted under his ministry. As I was passing through Kennebunk, in the winter of 1818, I was informed by an acquaintance, that the reformation, under the said Cochran, was marvellous—such as was never known in those parts before. He stated, that by only laying his hand on a person's head, he would immediately fall to the floor, cry out in great distress; and after continuing in that frame a short time, he would then be delivered from that distress, and shout, *Glory, &c.* That a few evenings before, he had laid his hands on *twelve persons*, who were all converted before the meeting closed. After giving me this information, he asked me if I ever saw him, and what I thought of him? I answered his questions very freely and plainly. He said he hoped I was mistaken, or would be a false prophet.

Hearing of this new sect in Portland, where their riotous proceedings in their assemblies made such disturbance, that two of their preachers were arrested by the civil magistrates, and committed to the common gaol, or house of correction; and having been an eyewitness to some of their irregularities in their meetings—the high pretensions and haughtiness of their public exhorters, &c., I was confirmed in my mind, that they were not the ministers and followers of Christ notwithstanding their good words and fair speeches. The persons committed to the house of correction, before mentioned, as disturbers of the peace, after they had been kept there about fourteen days, appeared sensible, in some good degree, of the impropriety of their past conduct, and were dismissed from their confinement. One of them appeared measurably cured of this evil disease, and like an honest man, is endeavoring to persuade others to apply to the great Physician, to obtain a cure for the malady. The other returned, or went to his own company, where he still continues; so it is evident the *prison* is not a certain cure.

The latter part of February last, I was credibly informed, that Jacob Cochran had been examined before a Justice's court, in the town of Saco, on the allegation of certain high crimes and misdemeanors, and on sundry complaints preferred against him ; and that the testimonies of the witnesses were such, that the court laid him under bonds, on one complaint, in the sum of \$800 ; and on another, in the sum of \$1000, for his appearance at the Supreme Court, to be holden in the county of York, in May next.

Subsequently to the foregoing, as I was passing through Kennebunk, and hearing of a meeting of this society, I thought I would once more go and hear for myself. On entering the house where the meeting was held, I found the people principally standing, the room not being provided with seats. I however found a seat, and sat down to watch their motions. They soon struck or commenced a lively tune, accompanied with words, while some fell to dancing and jumping. Others shouted *Amen*, or *Glory to God*, and *Glory to Jesus !* The jumping, dancing, singing, and shouting, however they might seem to those engaged in such exercises, was an awful jargon to me. After they had thus continued, till they were nearly out of breath, they would rest a few minutes, and then renew the same exercises with more vehemence than at first ; and at the close of every singing and dancing exercise, they would set up a general shout, which I doubt not might be heard miles.

After the meeting was over, I retired and spent the rest of the evening with six of this society, one of whom called himself an ordained minister. I had now, for the first time, an opportunity of inquiring into their distinguishing peculiar tenets. They, like all other enthusiasts, pretend to a light, superior to that of any other religious society, since the Apostles ; and the power of healing the sick, raising the dead, and casting out devils—all of which, they said, had been literally performed among them. Extraordinary dreams and visions, they asserted, had been experienced, and wonders wrought. They had *private*, sometimes *dark*, meetings ; in which none, but such as

were bound by oath, to the most inviolable secrecy, not to divulge what was transacted in the meeting, upon penalty of eternal damnation, or of having their names blotted out of the book of life, were admitted. That each brother and sister in this fraternity, has a spiritual husband, wife, mate, or yoke fellow, such as they choose, or their leaders choose for them. These spiritual mates, dissolve, or disannul, all former marriage connections; and many of them bed and board together, to the exclusion of all former vows. Such conduct as this, had not become general, and many would deny that such things existed among them, though proved by the most solemn declarations of persons of undoubted veracity. I had, before I left this place, such a discovery of the *mystery of iniquity*, working to the subversion of all social ties, between husband and wife, parents and children, rulers and ruled, ministers and people; the rising generation corrupted by the introduction of such vicious practices, under the cloak of religion, that it seemed as if I should be constrained to run from house to house, and cry day and night, against the abomination that maketh desolate.

When I arrived in the upper towns in the county of York, I found this dreadful hydrophobia, spreading, with all its dire effects—children denouncing imprecations against parents; members of churches against their pastors; neighbors against one another, &c. Those who join, and become members of this brotherhood, must renounce every natural connexion, and be exclusively under the control of their enthusiastic leaders; who, while they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for, of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage. And thus while they make so great a cry and show of *liberty*, any discerning person who is acquainted with their extravagant demeanor may perceive, that they have only substituted the word *liberty*, for that of *licentiousness*, which they indulge in the most indecorous and sensual gratifications. I inquired in my mind, *where are the watchmen* of the various denominations in this region, that they are not using every

effort to detect oppose, and publish to the world, this gross deception? I felt my own weakness; I knew my abilities and acquirements were small, and my talents inadequate to the task: but I said, *I will do what I can, to expose the deception if I die in the cause.* I am nearly three score years old, and my life of but little consequence. If I lose it, in attempting to expose and extirpate from the District of Maine, and from the world, one of the most scandalous frauds ever imposed on any people, under the name of religion, I said, I will venture my life and my all. To this end, I ventured alone, into that part of the town of Saco, which I understood was the seat of the beast, or near where Cochran kept his brothel. I inquired of his near neighbors, for his character, as a *citizen*. They informed me he was a man who could not be depended on, in the common affairs of life, and one who paid no regard to his promises;—that he was often seen, *if not in liquor*, with a great quantity of liquor *in him*. In short, a more ridiculous character I never heard delineated in the course of my life.

I inquired concerning the report gone abroad as to his being an instrument of the reformation said to be among them. They all agreed there had been a good work, in this and the neighboring towns, on both sides Saco River; but that Jacob Cochran, was so far from being an instrument of any good, he was the greatest hindrance it had met with. They considered him as creeping into the work, like those mentioned by Peter and Jude; or like those false apostles, *deceitful workers*, mentioned by Paul, transforming themselves into the ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their work. His proceedings in the course of this work, as described to me by persons of undoubted veracity, who attended the meetings all the way through, bear ample testimony to the truth of these statements, and corroborate the impressions on the mind thus excited.

He has a variety of singular movements in his public meetings, to arrest the attention and gain proselytes. Sometimes by laying his hand on a person's head, and extending his other hand and arm in an op-

posite direction; making a most horrid screaming in the ear; uttering the most dreadful imprecations, and predicting the awful day of judgment at hand. Sometimes shaking his fists near a person's face, and trembling himself, as if under some violent agitation or convulsion, and threatening immediate death and damnation. In this manner, persons would be frightened, or by some other means, persons thus operated upon, would fall to the floor or ground, and often be constrained to lick up the dust at his feet; and would not be delivered from the violent commotions and contortions they were in, until they were in a disposition to yield themselves entirely to his controul. When they have passed through these powerful and apparently distressing operations, they are said to have passed through the strait gate, or to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire; and are fit tools to be sent abroad, to propagate his doctrine, and make proselytes to his erroneous principles.

Nearly all his new operations and exercises are carefully predicted or foretold, by this arch deceiver, by which his stupid followers are made acquainted with them, before they come to pass. At one time, a cry is uttered by him, or some other in his assemblies, in the language of the angel in the Revelation, *Thrust in thy sickle, and reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe*. A number, in the assembly, will then be thrown into the greatest agitations; a violent exertion of the arms and body, for a long time together, takes place. These are called *reapers*, and the operation, *reaping*. To other violent motions of the arms and body, they give the appellation of *winnowing*, and *separating the chaff from the wheat*: another they call, *gathering and burning the chaff*.

Cochran pretends to have the power of life and death in his hands, and frightens his pupils into a compliance with any of his injunctions, by threatening to stop their breath in a moment; by which means he takes females from their parents, and carries them to his brothel. He declares he has the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and pretends to open it for, or shut it against, whom he sees fit, by stretching out, and making a violent wist with his arm, one way or the other.

He has introduced, among his followers, a feast, which he calls the *passover*; at which they all partake, at one table, provided for the purpose, at which, large quantities of mutton, lamb, bread and wine, &c. are expended. At this feast, he has a method of marching in a double file, consisting of a male and female, as far as the number of the males will admit, or hold out. But they pretend to have seven women to one man, in the society, alluding, as they told me, to a prophecy, in Isaiah—*On that day, shall seven women take hold of one man*, &c.—In these marches, they are instructed to step by the music, as they expect soon to carry a steel sword, and walk over dead bodies.

It seems their favourite amusement in this marching exercise, in a military movement, called *whipping the snake*. Cochran, with a favourite Miss, I understand, generally takes the lead in this marching business; and one of his foremost or most favored ministers, with another Miss, brings up the rear.

Much of his marching has been carried on at, and each way from, his dwelling house, in Saco, which is on the road leading from Saco falls to Buxton corner. This house I have never seen; but it has been described to me by those who have seen it, as a gloomy, dreary mansion, provided wholly with wooden shutters on the outside, the better to conceal, no doubt, the works of darkness practised within its walls.

The general family consists of twelve females, besides those who visit the house occasionally. Some of these are widows, who, with the rest of the females, have surrendered their persons, character and property into the common stock; and remain in this place, as those declare who have left them, destitute, to all appearance, of any profitable business; and are, most of them, forbidden to labor with their hands for a living; and intend, as I was informed in the neighborhood, that the wicked shall maintain them. Though I believe it is generally thought they will be hungry soon; as the property which has been obtained by this religious fraud is nearly spent; and not much prospect in his realizing his original purpose of having *all things common*, for any considerable time to come.

Cochran, and his deluded followers, have predicted the approach of bloody scenes, and the day of judgment to be near at hand. He has described the length of a steel sword (which each of his followers will have to carry in their hands) by the length of his own arm. It is not doubted, by those who have heard his boasting, that he expects to have the United States, the present season, under his control! Tells of more than *two thousand people*, now under him, ready to stand between him and the mouths of cannon. Boasts of what immense sums of money he can raise at the shortest notice. And it really appears, as though he looks forward to universal dominion.

Those, who are in close communion with him, are bound to obey him, without gainsaying; and this will account for his ruining the character of so many innocent females.

Having obtained this intelligence, and much more; I collected as many of the people in the vicinity, as were disposed to meet on the first day of April, 1819 it being the day of our annual state fast. As a watchman, I endeavored to declare what I saw. Without any farther acquaintance with them, I went home to N. Gloucester. But the case of these deluded people lay with such weight on my mind, as to render me unfit for any employment. I then procured the company of a pious young man, belonging to Gray, and returned to Saco within a week from the time I left it. We went to one of their meetings on Saturday evening. It was in unison with the one I described in Kennebunk, excepting the dancing. I said nothing until their meeting was over. I then told them, it was commonly reported, there was fornication among them; that their glorying was not good; that their leader was counted an abominable whoremonger; and unless they renounced his society, I was bound to consider them as one lump, notwithstanding all their glorying; according to the saying of Paul, in a like case, *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*.

The next day, being Lord's day, I went to their meeting. It was conducted much like the one at Kennebunk; only they had one of Jacob's foremost

preachers who undertook to preach. His discourse was a mass of incoherent, indigested stuff, which I could not receive ; though it was received by his society with shouts of applause, more like the howling of dogs and wolves, than the worship of a christian society. About the middle of the day, when there was a little cessation of their noise, I rose : I told them I did not mean ever to interrupt any religious society, nor speak in any man's house, without liberty. If their meeting was over, I wished to make a few observations. They were silent. I said I professed to be a watchman, as every christian ought to be. Christ has said to his apostles, *what I say unto you I say unto all, watch.* This made all his followers watchmen. As a watchman, I wished to have the privilege to declare what I saw, in that house, if there was liberty, or in any other place in the neighbourhood, where there was liberty. The pretended minister asked me if I was called of God ? I think so. Have you a particular message to this people ? I have. He replied, go on. I stated to them, it is likely it will take up an hour, or more, to declare what I see. Can I have so much time, without interruption ? This could not be granted by the minister, nor owner of the house. A brother in the meeting said his house was free. I then appointed a meeting at two o'clock, and withdrew. Cochran's minister appointed one at three o'clock and drew off the greatest part of his society with him. The rest heard with candor, and I thought, believed the report.

After attending five more meetings among them in different places, and hearing of another considerable society of the same class, in the town of Arundel, on the west side of Saco river, we went to visit them, and called at a private house in the neighbourhood of the society ; inquired after the leading, or most intelligent men among them ; hoping, if we convinced any of that description, they might be useful in convincing or undeceiving their neighbors. Having obtained the necessary information as to this particular, we were directed to the house of one of the society who was reputed to answer the above description. The land-

lady, his wife, met me as soon as I entered the room and wished to know whether I had the courage to kiss her. I declined, and took a seat, for which she called me a coward. I soon began to introduce my business, and laid open to him, and his neighbors of the same order, who soon gathered in, what I had discovered among them, which was passing for religion. But before I got more than half through with what I had to say, the man interrupted me, and wished to hear no more. And as I did not wish to be rude in his house, I waived the conversation for that evening, and tarried with him all night. Being invited to breakfast, by one of his neighbors the evening before ; in the morning the man went with me to the house. As soon as we were seated, I told him I considered myself now on equal ground with him, being in another man's house, and wished him to hear me. He consented. I proceeded—you doated much on your honesty last evening ; but I tell you I believe you to be a deceitful, dishonest man. I understand you have been a traveller, and a propagator of Cochran's sentiments : if so, you know what I told you to be true. You charged me in your house, before your family and neighbours, with retailing lies. I again made a fair statement of Cochran's conduct. He denied it again and again ; left me, and went to his own house. I took breakfast where I was, and soon followed him home, and asked leave to clear my mind in his family, which was large, and appeared to be deeply affected with the dreadful contagion of this religious hydrophobia ; some of the effects of which I expected to have to experience, if I cleared my mind. He consented I should do my duty. I then began the subject, where I left it the other evening ; and opened, as plainly as I could, the whole mystery of iniquity. The effect was powerful on him and his family ; he looked more like a demon, than a disciple of Christ. His two arms, trembling, were stretched towards my face ; his two large fists clenched. Loud vociferations of *lie*, and *har*, came from different parts of the room, from the mouths of his unmannerly children. And when he cried to God for a sword, with his fists so near my face, his wife

shouted a loud *Amen*. After the family had thus vent-
ed their spleen, in as full a manner as they dared, I
asked them to look over their conduct with candor,
and examine the treatment they had given me ;
whether it looked like christian treatment. I prom-
ised them better usage, if they would make me a vis-
it ; told them I came from pure motives, to visit and
warn them of the danger that awaited them ; that
they would one day find out the truth of what I told
them ; and that they would be sorry for the abuse
they had given me. I invited the man to ride abroad
with me, and visit some of his brethren, which he con-
sented to do, and ordered his horse. He rode with me
and my companion, and spent the day in visiting from
house to house ; and spent the evening with us, in a
public meeting, which appeared to have a good effect
on the minds of many.

The treatment which I received from this man and
his family, several of whom gave me the *lie direct*, af-
ter I left the house ; but who would, I doubt not, on
most other occasions, have used me kindly ; caused me
after I was gone in the language of the prophet, to
cry out with tears, *woe is me, my mother, that thou hast
borne me a man of strife*.

The different conduct of this family as above stated,
may look mysterious to some. I account for it in this
way : when they acted themselves, or as rational men
and women, free from the influence of prejudice and
jealousies, they were kind and hospitable. But when
under the operation of their religious phrenzy, they
conducted *unreasonably* to say the least. The man
before I parted with him, seemed willing to take ad-
vice, and promised to dig a little deeper than he had
done.

I returned again to Buxton and Saco ; but wherever
I turned, I thought I could discern greater and greater
abominations. I learnt that Cochran, among other
things, pretends to understand *masonry* ; and to some
peculiar favorites, it is said, he reveals the *secret* ; but
what it is, I was not informed. One of the pretended
signs of this kind, was, the male and female putting their
thumbs and fore-fingers together in the form of a trian-

gle, and kissing through them. Two young men informed, they saw Cochran take a young woman, into a dark private room, stay a considerable time ; and then come out with her. He asked if she did not see things different from what she did before ? Asked her if the fire did not look different ? She asked him why he wished her to say so ? He said, to increase the faith of the others. She at length, after much urging, said the fire looked different. He then took another female into the same room, after the same manner, and then another. He then told the remainder of the society, they must not be tried with him ; for those who were not tried, with him, he should love the better ; and those who were tried, must never tell of it.

Another young man, in presence of Judge Woodman, of Buxton, and myself, with several others, declared, that when he was admitted a member of Cochran's fraternity, he had to hold a Bible in his hand, while Cochran administered a solemn oath, or what was called so. The amount of which was, that if ever he divulged what took place in their private meetings, his name was to be blotted out of the book of life, and he suffer eternal damnation. He then pointed to, and named this young man's spiritual wife, and said he was willing they should lodge together, which they did, a number of nights, though he declared himself innocent of any sinful conduct. He testified, that Jacob Cochran lodged two nights, to his certain knowledge, while he was there, with a woman not his wife. Five couple more lodged in the same house, who were not husband and wife ; one of which, had a wife at home at her father's house at the same time. He tarried at this house of ill fame four nights, and came away innocent ; took another young man with him and went back to Cochran. They both asked for their dismissal, which was granted. Cochran told one of the young men, that he would keep his secret ; but as for the other, God Almighty would never let him rest, until he had brought him out. This proved true : for the same young man never found any peace in his mind, until he had violated his pretended oath, and publicly and

heartily confessed his wrong, and brought out the bad conduct he knew.

I have had the privilege of reading the depositions taken at his examination in Saco. And I candidly acknowledge they are so obscene, disgusting, and scandalous, I cannot, I will not, prostitute my pen, to write them; nor offend the eyes and ears of the public, to read and hear them. But having in some measure discharged my duty, in a religious point of view, I leave him in the hands of the magistrates, and let them publish their own documents.

Having gone through with my description of this fell disorder, I must proceed to point out in a few words, a *remedy*. God has, in mercy to us in this disordered world, provided a specific for every disorder of body and mind. When our bodies are disordered, we apply to the most skilful physician. Eternal wisdom has provided a remedy for all the diseases of the mind. The great specific for these disorders is called, the Plant of Renown, Ezek. xxxiv. 29. Root of Jesse, Isaiah xi. 10. Tree of Life, Rev. ii. 7. &c. The word of God points out these various disorders, and plainly points out a sufficient remedy for them. The great Physician says, *look unto me, and be ye saved*, &c. Prayer appears to be grossly neglected among this Society. In all their meetings, which I have attended, I have not heard one petition to God, either from their ministers or people. I would advise those who have been bitten by this religious maniac, to consider that the religion of Jesus is rational, and addressed to our reasoning faculties. The doctrine which Christ and his Apostles inculcated, is consistent; it inculcates repentance, and holds up Christ as the only leader to his people, and commands and exhorts us *to hear him in all things*. Your base leader has told you, that *himself* is that prophet, that Moses and the Apostles said was to be heard in all things. This makes him a false Apostle. Strive to come to a serious consideration. Thus saith the Lord, *consider your ways*. See the abominations depicted in this pamphlet, which you may be soon led into, in their full extent, if you have not already, if you do not stop

and think. I know the awful crimes above described, are hidden from many of you : but they are among you. Let me therefore say to you in the language of inspiration, "*come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, &c.*" You may find the character of your leaders plainly described by Peter, 2d Epistle, 2d chapter, and by the Apostle Jude which chapters I advise you to read, and weigh the contents in your mind candidly. Admit nothing for religion, which will not compare with God's holy word and spirit. Let the example of Elder JOHN BOOTHBY, and others, who have been preachers in your society, excite your imitation.—When they saw where this impostor was about to lead them, they publicly renounced any further communication or correspondence with him, and are now preaching against such wicked conduct, and inviting others to repent and turn to the Lord.

I close with a short Address to the Author of this Heresy.

DELUDED MAN!

While I was in the town of Saco, I found a scurrilous production, bearing your signature, and addressed to me, in the form of an open letter, lodged in the house of an acquaintance: in which the terms "*impudent scoundrel,*" "*servant of the Devil and Pluto,*" "*fornicator,*" "*liar,*" and "*excommunicated person*" are ascribed or appropriated to me. I did not expect any thing better than such epithets, from you and your adherents, while exposing your wickedness. And should have passed it by in silent contempt, had it not been that you have nearly *two hundred* persons, in different towns, in this district, now under your control; who believe every thing, you do and say, is right, and pay homage to you. These are the scattered remains of the "*more than two thousand*" you so lately boasted of, and I think the greater pity you have any. But I will inform them that I was incorporated in a religious society, in June, 1790: the records of our General Court will prove this fact. I was admitted a member of the Church under the same incorporation, and to which I now belong, in Nov. 1792, as the Church records in the town of New-Gloucester will testify. My certificate of ordination, signed by ministers of respectability, will prove that I was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, in the month of November, 1798. Since which, I have sufficient documents to prove, that I have baptized *one thousand and sixty-eight* persons, the last of them the winter past. I also hold the certificates of the Clerks of the Church and Society to which I belong, to prove, that I have been, and still am, in regular standing in said church and society, from the time first mentioned to the present date, your base insinuations to the contrary notwithstanding.

EPHRAIM STINCHFIELD.

New-Cloucester, April, 1819.